

The Sun

FRIDAY, AUGUST 4, 1876.

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THE SUN NEWSPAPER.
 Published every day in the year, at 100, 150, and 200 New York City. Its regular edition on Sunday days averages about 100,000. Its weekly edition on Sunday days averages about 100,000. Its daily edition on Sunday days averages about 100,000. Its weekly edition on Sunday days averages about 100,000.

Subscription Rates.
 Daily (4 pages), by mail, 50c a month, or \$5.00 a year, in advance.
 Sunday (2 pages), by mail, 25c a month, or \$2.50 a year, in advance.
 Weekly (2 pages), by mail, 10c a month, or \$1.00 a year, in advance.

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 Advertisements of religious societies, and meetings for religious purposes, held on Sunday, will be inserted without charge in the Sunday edition of THE SUN.

A Supposed Copy of Mr. Tilden's Letter.
 GENTLEMEN: I accept the nomination, and shall be happy to be elected by a large majority.

I will be on the steps of the Capitol at 12 o'clock, March 4, 1877, to take the oath of office. That oath I will faithfully keep.

If rebellion should reappear, I will speedily crush it out by the strong hand of the Federal Executive. Carpet-baggers I will not cherish. Taxes I will reduce.

I am in favor of specie payments all the time—this day, henceforward, and forever. I will do what I can to reform the civil service. In the first place, by turning out Gen. Grant's unworthy appointees; and in the second place, by convicting and punishing men who are appointed by their friends.

I am opposed to a third term, but am very strongly in favor of a first and second.

Faithfully yours,
 (Signed) SAMUEL J. TILDEN.

Senator Gordon's Bill—Folly Elaborated.
 Some measures before Congress consist of one great, complete folly. Senator Gordon's bill differs from these. It is composed of several follies, and is a sort of conglomerate, or pudding stone, of ridiculous propositions.

The purpose of this bill, as expressed in its title, is "To establish a competent and non-partisan revenue corps." The word corps, as applied to the civil service, is hardly appropriate. Corps means a body of troops, a division of an army. Senator Gordon possibly had in his mind the idea of a military corps, but he was not so much impressed by the importance of keeping military ideas out of the civil service, that we feel a repugnance to the introduction of military terms, to designate its several divisions.

Competent revenue officers it is desirable to have, since revenue officers of some kind are indispensable. As to their being non-partisan, we do not see why that should be required of them, any more than that they should be enuchs.

Let us consider, in detail, some of the provisions of the measure which Mr. Gordon has introduced into the Senate.

First: "All appointments in the Revenue Department shall be confined to the lowest grades, namely, gaugers and storekeepers." Apply this principle to any private business, that of a hotel keeper, for instance. A bootblack has sometimes risen to become a good steward. Suppose the law of the State forbade a hotel keeper to employ any steward unless he first came as a bootblack!

Secondly: These gaugers and storekeepers are to be appointed upon "competitive examination." Examination in what? In gauging and storekeeping, of course. Whether the one who has gauged the longest or gauged the most, or the one who has kept a store the longest or kept the biggest store, is to be deemed first in the competitive examination, we are not informed. As the corps, however, is to be "non-partisan," while the successful applicant must be proficient in gauging and storekeeping, his chances will also depend largely on his being profoundly ignorant of State and national affairs, and correspondingly indifferent to them. The negroes from those counties in the South in which, according to Mr. Wheeler, the Republican candidate for Vice-President, there is not a single school house, would be likely to bear off the palm in this branch of the examination.

Thirdly: The higher grades of Deputy Collector, Collector, and Supervisor, shall be filled only by promotion from the next lower grades, and also upon competitive examinations. No man in the United States can be a Collector of Internal Revenue, a Deputy Collector, or a Supervisor, unless he has first been a gauger or storekeeper! Now a man may be fully competent to be a gauger or storekeeper without possessing scarcely any of the qualifications requisite to a good Collector or Supervisor. Indeed, his accepting the inferior and almost contemptible position of gauger or storekeeper is, in itself, no light evidence of his unfitness for an office of gauger or storekeeper, and much less evidence of his fitness for a higher office.

It is plain that the title of Mr. Gordon's bill is a misnomer. Instead of reading: "A bill to establish a competent corps," it should be: "A bill to establish a more incompetent corps." Now, we have all the men in the country to select Collectors, Deputy Collectors, and Supervisors from, and they are bad enough at that. Then we should have only the limited and inferior class holding the office of gauger and storekeeper—with a stupid indifference to public affairs to be regarded as a recommendation in picking from even this poor lot!

Fourthly: The promotions are to be determined by an Examining Board. These boards are to be "appointed by the Commissioner of Internal Revenue, with the

approval of the Secretary of the Treasury, at such places as the necessities of the service may require, and are each to consist of three freeholders of good standing, one of whom shall belong to a different political party from the other two."

Pretty well, for a "non-partisan" civil service! Every member of the board must "belong" to a political party. An odd non-partisan beginning! Then one party has two-thirds of the members of these boards, and the other party only one. Non-partisan again, with a vengeance!

They are to be of "good standing." Who is to determine that? Would it not seem a little hard to say that any man of the same personal habits and the same associates as the President of the United States is not of good standing? Yet, how much of a test would that amount to?

They must be freeholders—an aristocratic, property qualification not even required of a President of the United States! Above all, oppressed as the people are, by the present galling load of taxation, this is a proposition to create a new swarm of public officers to eat out their substance.

The reader may infer that, on the whole, and after a very careful consideration of the subject, our impressions are not favorable to Senator Gordon's bill. We trust, however, it may afford some satisfaction to our civil service Republican friends to find a former rebel General substantially agreeing with them in their follies.

The Flaw in the French Republic.
 How long would the people of the United States tolerate a government under the control of Federal officers, but all State and local authorities, including the Mayor of every city and the municipal officers of every town, were the appointees, and therefore the creatures, of the President? Should we not account the name of republic dishonored if it were used to cloak such arbitrary and offensive powers, and the scheme of universal suffrage a mockery if it refused to recognize local self-government as its primary and essential basis? Yet this is precisely the state of things which has existed during the MacMahon régime in the so-called republic of France, and which a bill lately proposed by the now Ministry seeks, with small prospect of success, to reform.

It is a significant fact, some would say decisive, as regards the capacity of the French people for self-government, that while the enjoyment of the right of suffrage has undergone progressive extension throughout a century of revolution and experiment, its field of exercise, or the substantial value of the right, is in some respects more contracted than under the old Bourbon monarchy. The principle of local self-government had a solid foothold in the ancient régime. Hampered as the franchise doubtless was by property qualifications, and often restricted to the king's corporations, the privileges it conferred were real and highly prized, since in almost every French city the executive officer, Mayor, Consul or échevin, was designated not by the crown but by a local assembly. Under that system, municipal concerns were in the hands of a small body of electors, but this was at all events composed of citizens identified with the interests, and sensitive to the opinion, of their town. It was not likely that the Constituent Assembly of 1789, called to bestow on a whole nation franchises, before confined to one or another class, would begin by mutilating their substantial value. Quite the contrary: the privileges enjoyed by the most favored cities were extended to every commune or parish throughout the kingdom, the administration of municipal or parish affairs being confided to a Mayor who was to be elected by universal suffrage. For a few years France was suffered to exercise the right of local self-government in the wide and absolute sense which we give to the phrase in the United States, and she has never exercised it since.

Undermined and crippled by the Directory, the system of independent communal administration was annihilated under the Consulate and the Empire. In the form of government inaugurated by Napoleon, Mayors and municipal councilors still figured, but there was no longer any pretence of election, all such officers being appointed by the First Consul, or by his delegates, the Prefects of the provinces. With so perfect a scheme of centralization, we can understand the almost total suppression of popular discontent until the final collapse of the First Empire; nor is it surprising that the reactionaries, who controlled the legislatures of the Restoration, should have refused to surrender an instrument so well calculated to further their designs. But on the accession of Louis Philippe a long step was taken toward the reestablishment of local liberties. Not only was it decided that the municipal council should be elected by the inhabitants of a commune, but the King was obliged to select the Mayor from among the members of that body. It is not to be forgotten, however, that at this period the basis of the suffrage was a property qualification, tempered with the addition of certain categories, the so-called "capacités" which substantially coincided with the learned professions.

When the revolution of 1848 had restored universal suffrage, and was proceeding to readjust political institutions in harmony with that principle, it was loudly affirmed that the appointment of Mayors could logically no longer be surrendered to the central power, but must be vested in the municipal council, if not directly in the local voters, as is the case in the United States. Strange to say, a difference in opinion revealed itself in debate even among republicans, some distinguished members of the Left predicting that no Government would be able to maintain itself without holding the local administration. Communal independence, however, received provisional and partial sanction, but before a definitive law could be enacted the coup d'état of 1851 put an end to the Assembly and to progress in this direction.

The Second Empire dealt with this as with other popular liberties, flouting and spurning them while it knew itself to be strong, and cringing and trucking to them in its days of weakness. By the Constitution of 1852, the Government at once resumed the appointment of the Mayors throughout the 36,000 communes of France, claiming the right of selecting them, moreover, outside of the communal councils. When called to the latter bodies, under a law of 1855, could be supposed by an arbitrary commission, it was seen that the aims and processes of the First Empire were faithfully copied by the nephew of his uncle. Neither is much credit due to the Ollivier Ministry for a law reverting to the policy of compromise pursued by Louis Philippe, when we consider the date

of its enactment, seven days after the declaration of war against Prussia. The history of local self-government in France opens its last chapter with the Assembly of 1871, which, imbued with the decentralizing views of Prévost-Paradol and the Duc de Broglie, was disposed to regard municipal liberties as a refuge against anarchy. Accordingly the nomination of Mayors was once more lodged in the communal councils. M. Thiers having scarcely been able by the threat of resignation to save to his Government the right of appointment for capitals of departments and cities of more than twenty thousand inhabitants, the reactionary was the Government of MacMahon until the overthrow of the Buffet Ministry, is demonstrated by the fact that it instantly reverted to the traditions of the Empire on this subject, asserting the right to name the Mayor for every commune, and refusing to be confined in choice to the members of the communal board. At length, France pronouncing for a republic, and a new Assembly having been organized under the control of the Left, the present Ministry have introduced a measure which revives in substance the act in force under the Government of Thiers. There is little doubt that the bill will be acceptable to a majority of the Chamber of Deputies, and it is almost equally certain that it will be rejected by the Senate.

So much for the history of that problem of centralization which is beyond comparison the most difficult question to the legislators of France. Not that the solution would be long delayed were the conflict narrowed to opposition between a Chamber of Deputies representing the will of the nation, and a Senate which represents in the main nothing beyond the prejudices and cabals of a defunct Assembly. Public opinion is far more evenly divided. Some of the most sagacious and most liberal of French statesmen affirm that the majority of small communes are not qualified to regulate their own concerns. They even state a matter of fact that under the Government of Thiers a competent person could hardly be found to undertake the functions of Mayor in the rural parishes so long as the king's corporations, and doubtless restricted to the king's corporations, the privileges it conferred were real and highly prized, since in almost every French city the executive officer, Mayor, Consul or échevin, was designated not by the crown but by a local assembly. Under that system, municipal concerns were in the hands of a small body of electors, but this was at all events composed of citizens identified with the interests, and sensitive to the opinion, of their town. It was not likely that the Constituent Assembly of 1789, called to bestow on a whole nation franchises, before confined to one or another class, would begin by mutilating their substantial value. Quite the contrary: the privileges enjoyed by the most favored cities were extended to every commune or parish throughout the kingdom, the administration of municipal or parish affairs being confided to a Mayor who was to be elected by universal suffrage. For a few years France was suffered to exercise the right of local self-government in the wide and absolute sense which we give to the phrase in the United States, and she has never exercised it since.

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So much for the history of that problem of centralization which is beyond comparison the most difficult question to the legislators of France. Not that the solution would be long delayed were the conflict narrowed to opposition between a Chamber of Deputies representing the will of the nation, and a Senate which represents in the main nothing beyond the prejudices and cabals of a defunct Assembly. Public opinion is far more evenly divided. Some of the most sagacious and most liberal of French statesmen affirm that the majority of small communes are not qualified to regulate their own concerns. They even state a matter of fact that under the Government of Thiers a competent person could hardly be found to undertake the functions of Mayor in the rural parishes so long as the king's corporations, and doubtless restricted to the king's corporations, the privileges it conferred were real and highly prized, since in almost every French city the executive officer, Mayor, Consul or échevin, was designated not by the crown but by a local assembly. Under that system, municipal concerns were in the hands of a small body of electors, but this was at all events composed of citizens identified with the interests, and sensitive to the opinion, of their town. It was not likely that the Constituent Assembly of 1789, called to bestow on a whole nation franchises, before confined to one or another class, would begin by mutilating their substantial value. Quite the contrary: the privileges enjoyed by the most favored cities were extended to every commune or parish throughout the kingdom, the administration of municipal or parish affairs being confided to a Mayor who was to be elected by universal suffrage. For a few years France was suffered to exercise the right of local self-government in the wide and absolute sense which we give to the phrase in the United States, and she has never exercised it since.

Undermined and crippled by the Directory, the system of independent communal administration was annihilated under the Consulate and the Empire. In the form of government inaugurated by Napoleon, Mayors and municipal councilors still figured, but there was no longer any pretence of election, all such officers being appointed by the First Consul, or by his delegates, the Prefects of the provinces. With so perfect a scheme of centralization, we can understand the almost total suppression of popular discontent until the final collapse of the First Empire; nor is it surprising that the reactionaries, who controlled the legislatures of the Restoration, should have refused to surrender an instrument so well calculated to further their designs. But on the accession of Louis Philippe a long step was taken toward the reestablishment of local liberties. Not only was it decided that the municipal council should be elected by the inhabitants of a commune, but the King was obliged to select the Mayor from among the members of that body. It is not to be forgotten, however, that at this period the basis of the suffrage was a property qualification, tempered with the addition of certain categories, the so-called "capacités" which substantially coincided with the learned professions.

When the revolution of 1848 had restored universal suffrage, and was proceeding to readjust political institutions in harmony with that principle, it was loudly affirmed that the appointment of Mayors could logically no longer be surrendered to the central power, but must be vested in the municipal council, if not directly in the local voters, as is the case in the United States. Strange to say, a difference in opinion revealed itself in debate even among republicans, some distinguished members of the Left predicting that no Government would be able to maintain itself without holding the local administration. Communal independence, however, received provisional and partial sanction, but before a definitive law could be enacted the coup d'état of 1851 put an end to the Assembly and to progress in this direction.

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